

# CORPS' PONDENT

Vol. 30, No. 4 April 2006



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Portland District

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PHOTO BY JAMES KEGLEY/ASCE

**S**arah Ebner, (right), looks at photos of mom Laurie Ebner, Engineering and Construction Division, in a 2006 Equal Opportunity publication, *Changing Our World: True Stories of Women Engineers*. Ebner, who holds a doctorate degree in civil engineering, attended a book signing event at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., was one of a number of women engineers whose contributions through engineering are highlighted in the book.



# COMMANDER'S COLUMN

Just a few years ago, I wouldn't have dreamed we could form partnerships that are becoming common to our agency – such as the strategic partnership the Portland and Walla Walla districts recently entered into with The Nature Conservancy. The Memorandum of Agreement we signed is an extension of the national agreement formed by the Corps and The Nature Conservancy. The overarching theme is to safeguard important biological resources. Our agreement focuses on realistic yet effective ways to protect the ecological health of our rivers and wetlands while still accomplishing our missions in hydropower generation and flood damage reduction.



Col. Thomas O'Donovan

our strengths whenever we can is a smart strategy.

Finally, combining our strengths as an organization is something the employees of Portland District do very well. I have been impressed by the level of dedication and commitment shown by Portland District employees, and that includes those who have retired from the Corps. After working for many years with the Corps, you won't find these folks sitting in a lawn chair out in the backyard very often – many of them remain in the workforce as consultants, or go on to elected offices in local and

state government. These people are vital, energetic ambassadors for the Corps of Engineers, who with their wealth of experience are showing the public a new side of Corps service. I hope you will join me for the

annual Retiree Luncheon on May 8 to visit with old friends and honor this year's inductee into the Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees.

*Essays!*



Russell Hoefflich, the Oregon director for The Nature Conservancy, Randy Glaeser of Walla Walla District and I have built a bridge between traditionally isolated points of view that I believe will become the norm in the future. We won't always agree on the best way to accomplish our missions, but the decisions will be better for looking at our processes from varying points of view. I hope this MOU will be just the first of many designed to help us work together toward a common goal.

Within Portland District, The Nature Conservancy will bring their knowledge and experience to our review of the Willamette River dams. We want them to help us determine whether we should revise our operations to better meet the ecological needs of the rivers and streams affected by the dams. I'm sure this will be only the first of many partnering opportunities with the Conservancy. They have strengths as a non-governmental agency that compliment our governmental strengths; I believe combining

**Editor's Note:** In the March issue of the *Corps'pondent* we incorrectly stated that Shirley Chisholm ran for president in 1968. In fact, Ms. Chisholm entered the presidential race in 1972. We regret the error.

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is an unofficial offset publication authorized under provisions of AR 360-1, published monthly by the Public Affairs Office of the Portland District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Circulation 2000. The Corps'pondent is circulated to District employees, retirees, and persons who request it in writing. The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Army.

Contributions, on computer disc or as hard copy, are welcome. If you have news tips or suggestions for articles, call (503) 808-4510, or forward them address them to the following address:

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### Check out the Corps'pondent online at:

<https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/pa/cp/home.asp>

Publication Services are provided by Schatz Publishing Group.

The Corps'pondent is printed on recycled paper.





# Corps Women

## Named Role Models

Debby Chenoweth, chief, Operations Division, and Laurie Ebner, hydraulic engineer, Engineering and Construction Division, were recently named as Department of Defense Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) role models.

In recognition of Women's History Month, both women were recognized at a national observance at the Women's Memorial in Arlington Cemetery in Arlington, Va.


Chenoweth's selection was based, in part, on her proactive approach to quality and diversity throughout the Corps of Engineers. A written nomination stated that "she is a role model, not only for women, but for all employees within the Corps and has earned the respect and admiration of all who have worked with her."

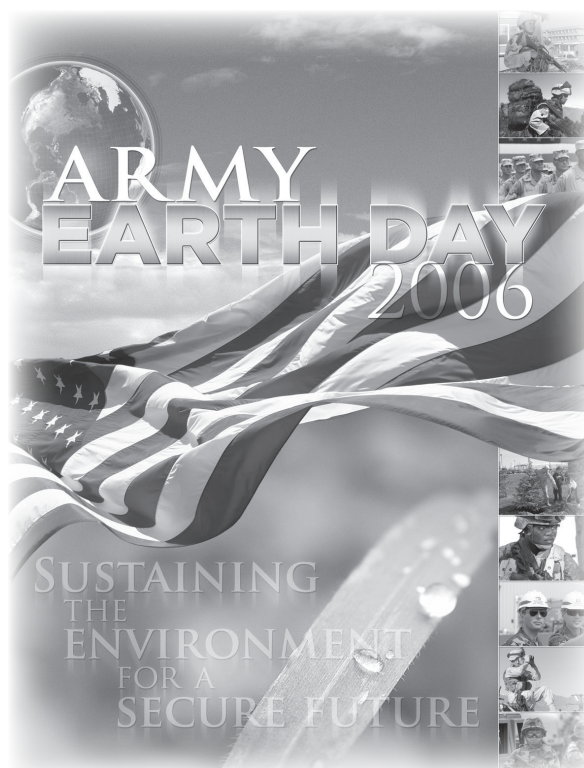
In the 30 years of Chenoweth's career, she set many firsts, working her way from a park ranger in 1973 to her current position as chief of Operations. Her nomination packet summed it up like this: "Her dedication and commitment to bringing communities together and maintaining a positive and supportive attitude in the face of many challenges is reflected in every program she directs."

Ebner also was featured in the 2006 Equal Opportunity publication, "Changing Our World: True Stories of Women Engineers." The book, a product of the Extraordinary Women Engineers Project Coalition (EWEP), highlights the role that women engineers have had and are having on making the world a better place.

"People don't drive down the road or fly in a plane and think, 'a group of engineers have improved my life because of this,'" Ebner said. "The book's purpose is to provide glimpses of real, live engineers and how what we do impacts the world we live in."

Ebner said the book also highlights women who are able to balance their careers with a meaningful family life and/or personal interests. "It is a coffee table book, but it makes for interesting reading."

This year's Women's History Month theme, *Women: Builders of Communities and Dreams*, honored the spirit of possibility and hopes set in motion by generations of women who have created communities and sustained dreams. 



**E**arth Day is an international event demonstrating concern and mobilizing support for the environment. Earth Day was first celebrated on April 22, 1970, and rallied more than 20 million Americans to become involved in environmental activities.

Although Earth Day is April 22, and many celebrations are scheduled on or near that date, it is important to remember that environmental responsibility is more than a one-day event. Army Earth Day exemplifies a daily commitment to the stewardship of the public resources entrusted to military care. Earth Day is the annual call for public attention toward environmental issues.

## RETIREES:

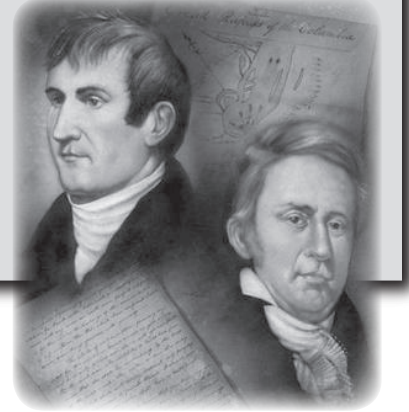
If you haven't already, please reserve your place at the May 8 Retiree Luncheon by sending \$12 for each person by April 30. The cost per person goes up to \$15 after April 30! Checks made out to ACE should be sent to the Public Affairs Office. Questions? Call Heidi Helwig at (503) 808-4510.



April 1806:

# The Journey Home Begins

By Melissa Rinehart  
Operations Division



*"Passed several beautiful cascades which fell from a great height over the stupendous rocks which closes the river on both sides nearly, the most remarkable of these cascades falls about 300 feet perpendicularly over a solid rock into a narrow bottom of the river on the south side." Meriwether Lewis - April 9, 1806*

April 1806 brought the expedition through lands and waters of today's Portland District. Although the landscape has change considerably since then, the captains were able to take in the beauty of some of our favorite local landmarks: the Sandy River, Multnomah Falls, Horsetail Falls, Memaloose Island and the rapids that were located at the current sites of both Bonneville and The Dalles dams.

As the expedition began their trip upriver, the spring runoff from the nearby mountains gave them a considerable challenge. They passed Multnomah Falls in early April and came to the cascades of the Columbia. The rapids and current were much stronger than they remembered, and to transport all their cargo upriver the men had to pull the boats, filled with supplies, along the north shore. They had to tow the boats one at a time because they had

only one good rope. It was during this time that they visited "Brant Island" – today's Bradford Island and home to the Bonneville Lock and Dam Visitor Center. Over a three day period they only traveled 7 miles and lost one of the pirogues.

Lewis wrote in his journal that "dog now constitutes a considerable part of our subsistence and with most of the party has become a favorite food; certain I am that it is a healthy strong diet, and from habit it has become by no means disagreeable to me, I prefer it to lean venison or Elk and is very far superior to the horse in any state." It is no surprise, then, that local tribes attempted to steal the Newfoundland dog, Seamen, during the portage at the Cascades. Three armed members of the expedition were able to save the dog and return him to camp.

The expedition's weapons were kept in working order thanks to the efforts of John



*Capt. Lewis purchased a Newfoundland dog like the one above for \$20 in 1803, and named him Seaman. Seaman was quickly adopted by the crew and became known as "Our Dog."*

In celebration of this portion of the expedition, be sure to visit the commemoration event "The Last Portage – Carrying Change," being held April 7 through April 10 in Stevenson, Wash. For information on guest speakers and events, visit <http://www.skamania.org>. Corps Rangers will be there providing programs and information.

Shields. The captains maintained readiness with regular "shooting and regulating their guns," and highlighted their appreciation for Pvt. Shields. Lewis stated that the "The party owes much to the ingenuity of this man, by whom their guns are repaired when they get out of order which is very often." Each challenge was met through the skills, teamwork and strengths of each member.

In order to complete their journey home, the remaining stores of trade items had to be traded for canoes; later the canoes would be traded for horses. The Columbia River was alive with tribal activity, in part due to the return of the spring salmon runs. Tribal members visited their encampments daily as the expedition slowly made its way upriver. They hoped to trade for what they could; shrewd bargaining was required and the men were forced to pay substantially for the canoes and horses they acquired. By the middle of the month, Lewis was unable to obtain a single horse and began "to fear we shall not be enabled to obtain as many horses at this place as will convey our baggage [which] unless we do obtain a

sufficient number must still be conveyed by water." Near the end of the month, however, the expedition was warmly greeted by Chief Yelleppit of the Walla Walla tribe. They were able to trade for dogs, horses and canoes. "Great Chief Yelleppit brought a very elegant white horse to our camp and presented him to me, signifying his wish to get a kettle but being informed that we had already disposed of every kettle we could possibly spare he said he was content with whatever I thought proper. I gave him my sword, 100 balls & powder and some small articles of which he appeared perfectly satisfied," Lewis wrote.

As horses were acquired the journey became much more tolerable for the men. When they finally left the Walla Walla tribe and continued their journey, the land was described as "covered with aromatic shrubs herbaceous plains and a short grass." The arduous challenge of portaging the cascades undoubtedly made the brighter days of the eastern gorge a welcome sight. With enough food and horses to sustain and carry them, the expedition proceeded eastward on their way home. 📖

*North America,  
circa 1803*





# HURRICANE KATRINA

*Portland District Commander Col. Tom O'Donovan, left, talks with AshBritt contractor representatives at a temporary reduction site handling white goods near Waveland, Miss.*



CORPS OF ENGINEERS PHOTO

## *Unforeseen hazards in debris left by Hurricane Katrina are posing an environmental challenge*

By Diana Fredlund, Public Affairs Office

FEATURE

People usually enjoy the Mississippi Gulf Coast weather, but after Hurricane Katrina, the heat and humidity left residents and relief workers holding their noses.

With the infrastructure damaged or destroyed, electricity to power lights, machinery and appliances was nearly nonexistent. That left homes and businesses with an increasingly pungent problem: rotting food, damp and molding wood and standing water.

It was immediately clear to the Corps employees tasked with developing the debris removal mission that hazardous materials could be anywhere. "Everyone's home contains hazardous materials of some kind," said David Wallace of Vicksburg District. "It may be paint, household cleaners or gasoline for a lawn mower. Everything stored in peoples' homes was suddenly introduced into the environment by the hurricane."

"Dealing with the environmental aspects of debris removal required specific instructions to the contractor about disposing of household hazardous materials," said Glen Smith of The Dalles Lock and Dam. Smith deployed to Mississippi the day before the hurricane struck; as the first mission manager tasked with debris removal, he was involved with setting up

debris reduction sites throughout Mississippi. "The land was already stressed because of the hurricane, so it was important to be sure our debris reduction and disposal sites were environmentally sound," Smith said. The Corps worked closely with the EPA and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality to ensure that sites were properly situated.

Because the Gulf Coast contains extensive wetlands, finding sites that qualified was challenging. Before property could be identified as a temporary reduction site, the Corps performed an environmental analysis, both to make sure the land was suitable for this use and to determine a baseline for its condition before debris was located there, Smith said. "We needed to know in order to return the site to its original condition, but it was also important to know if other environmental concerns already existed.

"We were faced with needing many reduction and disposal sites," Smith said. "We knew how the various types of debris would be separated, but first we needed sites where we could separate the material into categories: vegetative, household hazardous waste, white goods and construction and demolition material." The extensive damage meant everything was mixed together and couldn't be separated at the

curb, as the Corps usually does in clean-up efforts, Smith said.

Vegetative debris, consisting of trees, limbs and bushes uprooted by the hurricane, was reduced to mulch and distributed or incinerated in accordance with EPA air quality guidelines. Blueberry farmers, pulp and paper power generating companies and mulch distributors were the main beneficiaries of the reduced vegetative debris.


Particularly difficult was handling white goods, or household appliances. These were separated into dirty white goods (those with food left in them), and clean white goods. Each needed to be cleaned and have refrigerants or other chemicals removed before being sold as scrap. "Because there was so much debris to remove, days or weeks may have gone by before dirty white goods were picked up for disposal," Smith said. "This part of the mission was definitely challenging." Contractors needed special clothing and equipment to remove all organic material and clean the refrigerators and freezers, Smith said.

Construction and demolition materials such as insulation, glass, and roof tiles were treated as hazardous and sent directly to landfills authorized to accept them. Not all hazardous materials were from housing materials, however. "When you talk about hazardous materials, people usually think of chemicals, but the first and biggest challenge in the recovery effort was removing millions of pounds of fish, shrimp and chicken from the commercial distributors on the coast," Smith said. "That was a critical health and safety issue that several agencies had to address quickly." The decomposing food not only made working conditions difficult around the port where the seafood exporters were located, it posed significant health threats to workers and residents.

"The Corps' tremendous depth of disaster recovery experience was key to getting our arms around this unprecedented disaster and response," said Col. Anthony Vesay, Vicksburg District and Task Force Hope Mississippi Commander. "The level of debris exceeded anything on record, but our teams have honed processes from Hurricane Andrew to the World Trade Center. With more than 23 million cubic yards of debris to remove, separate and process,

this mission will make our teams that much more valuable to the nation and those who look to us for response and recovery in the future."

As the debris removal mission moves into its final phase, the Corps will continue working to separate and dispose of the remaining debris and return the temporary reduction sites to their original condition. When that task is finished, Mississippi residents can focus on rebuilding their homes and businesses.

Nearly nine months after the hurricane wreaked havoc on the Gulf Coast, the sea breeze off the coast brings some relief to residents as the humid summer weather warms up again. There is much to do to rebuild, but progress is being made. Best of all, restaurants are getting back in business, and the air is filled with the delicious smells of fresh fish, shrimp and chicken, ready to be served to residents, relief workers and tourists. 



CORPS OF ENGINEERS PHOTO

*Thousands of homes damaged beyond repair by Hurricane Katrina will be demolished and the housing materials are sent to landfills authorized to accept it. The contents of these homes were strewn into the rivers, wetlands and forested areas along the Gulf Coast.*



CORPS OF ENGINEERS PHOTO

*Equipment operator Paul Brown from All South Construction, a sub contractor of AshBritt, adds Hurricane Katrina debris to an air curtain.*





By Jennifer Sowell  
Public Affairs Office

## Would-be engineers learn about

# CORPS CAREERS



One of the first tough decisions we all had to make was figuring out what we wanted to do after high school. Many students spend their first years of college trying to figure out what path to pursue.

Students who already have some idea of what career field interests them have a definite advantage, and the roughly 100 high school students who attended Engineering Day with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are a step ahead of their peers when it comes to planning for their futures.

Each year high school students with an interest in engineering are invited to attend Engineering Day

at Robert Duncan Plaza. The event is held during National Engineers Week to give local students a chance to expand their knowledge of the field and get an idea of the types of education and career choices available to them.

During the opening remarks this year, students learned about the general field of engineering as well as what the Corps does. District Commander Col. Tom O'Donovan and Deputy District Commander Lt. Col. Phil Kaufmann explained the role of the military in Portland District's primarily civilian organization.

After being welcomed, the students moved into



## National Engineers Week

is a formal coalition of engineering, education, and cultural societies, as well as corporations and government agencies. It is dedicated to raising public awareness of engineers' positive contributions to our quality of life.

Engineers Week promotes recognition among parents, teachers and students of the importance of a technical education and a high level of math, science and technology literacy. The events during the week are intended to motivate youths to pursue engineering careers in order to provide a diverse, vigorous and informed engineering workforce.

Each year Engineers Week reaches thousands of schools, businesses and community groups across the United States.

smaller groups and spent most of the day rotating through presentations and demonstrations that were as varied as the jobs performed by Corps employees.

From presentations on dredge operations and sea lion exclusion devices to hands-on structural and electrical engineering demonstrations, the round-robin style rotations showed students some of the interesting work they might be responsible for if they worked for the Corps.

John Etzel, Hydroelectric Design Center, gave one of the most popular demonstrations of the day. Etzel challenged each group of students to build a structure using only the items he provided in eight minutes: dry pasta, marshmallows, toothpicks, some adhesive mailing labels and a couple of straws.

"Part of teaching kids creative problem solving is to find challenging – and fun – things for them to work on," said Etzel.

Each group's structure was judged on height and soundness, with extra points awarded to height in excess of 8 inches. To compete, the structure had to be able to hold the weight of nails placed one at a time into an empty margarine container sitting on top of the structure; the more nails it could hold, the more points it earned.

"This activity is generally a big hit because of the hands-on nature and the competitive twist it has wrapped up in it," said Etzel.

When a group of students from Merlo Station High School added one nail too many and caused their structure to fall apart, the students begged to try again, proving that Etzel, at least, had a structurally sound presentation.

The students also learned about the interdisciplinary work performed by the Corps. "It's important to note that you don't have to be an engineer to work for the Corps of Engineers," said Dennis Schwartz, a fisheries biologist.

Schwartz's presentation on acoustic telemetry showcased a project where professionals from biology work closely with engineers to produce a fish tracking system for the Columbia River.



(Left to right) Merlo Station High School students Tej Reddy, Jennifer Guerrero and Edgar Mendez perfect their pasta tower as part of John Etzel's structural presentation.





"It's a challenge each year to come up with new and inventive ways to make a presentation that the students will remember and enjoy," Schwartz said. "The important thing is to emphasize and encourage higher education as the pathway to these types of career fields."

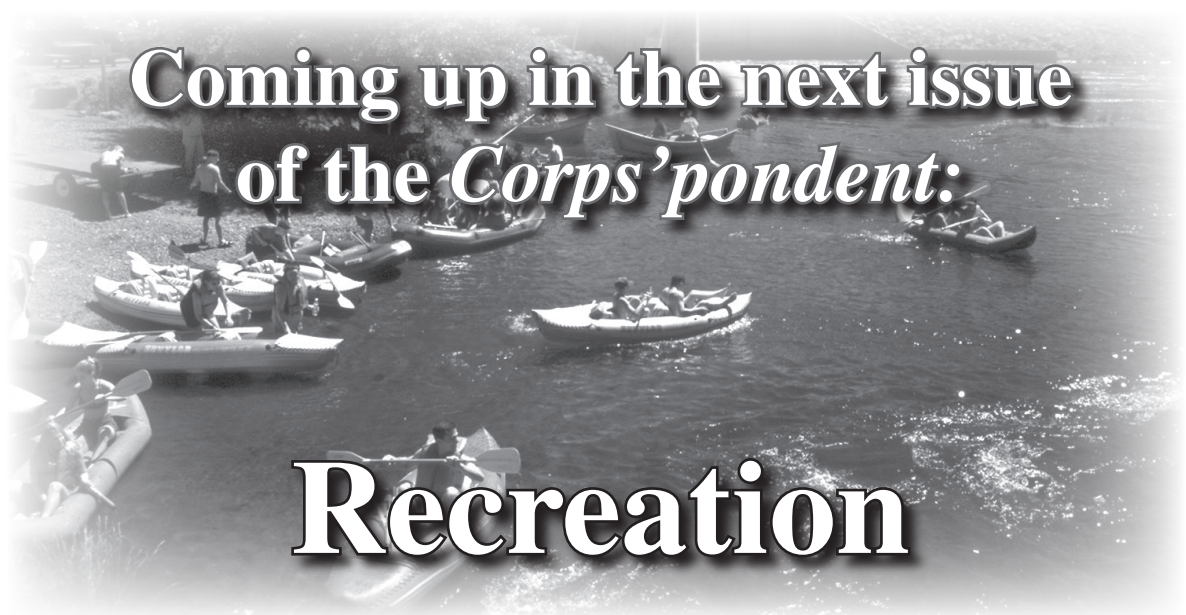
Aside from learning from the engineers themselves, students also spent time networking with local architectural and engineering firms, colleges and universities at a career fair. Army recruiters were on hand for the first time since the event has been held in the District. Soldiers answered questions and discussed options for students within the Army, such as programs that help pay for college tuition. Corps employees were also present at the career fair with information about student employment opportunities available with Portland District.

Many students have knowledge of only a few of the more visible options within a career field, until they become interested enough to learn more. The District's Engineering Day provides a forum to learn about the variety of jobs within the engineering field for those students who are planning for life after high school.

"Thank you for the great day," said Randy Dickinson, who attended the event as a chaperone. "Both my granddaughter Jessica and fellow homeschooler Jon saw more opportunities in the engineering field than they had realized existed," he said.



*Henry Buchanan from Forest Grove High School prepares to test drive a Segway after receiving instructions on how to operate it from OSU chemical engineering student, John Yoder.*



**Coming up in the next issue  
of the *Corps'pondent*:**

# Recreation



# Administrative Professionals keep offices in good order



By the Portland District Public Affairs Staff

**1.** **Question:** How long does it take to say thank you?  
**Answer:** Less time than it takes to order supplies, schedule a meeting or request travel orders.

**2.** **Question:** How long has it been since you told your administrative professional how much you appreciate his or her work?  
**Answer:** Too long.

The administrative professionals throughout the District are known as executive secretaries, office clerks, office administrative assistants and legal clerks, to name a few.

"They make our days brighter and our work lighter," said Matt Rabe, chief, Public Affairs Office. "They relieve us from onerous tasks which require a lot of time and knowledge of diverse and esoteric matters so that I can dedicate myself to meeting my primary duties and responsibilities," said Michael Doane, Internal Review officer. According to Brent Mahan, director, Hydroelectric Design Center, they also keep the organization running smoothly.

Being an administrative professional isn't what it used to be. History tells us that during the industrial expansion, business offices faced a paperwork crisis. Clerks solved the problem by adapting to new technologies such as adding and calculating machines and, later, telephones and typewriters.

But being a secretary wasn't for the faint of heart. Years ago, a secretary may have been expected to fetch the coffee and take out the trash. But times have changed.

According to the International Association of Administrative Professionals, administrative professionals are becoming researchers and not just disseminators of information. Work teams are more prevalent now. Job descriptions—and duties—have expanded.

"Our admin professional is ultimately responsible for making the

system work on a day-to-day basis," said Bill Yerabek, chief, Logistics Management Office. "She uses the team approach to accomplish tasks with new ways of operating that lead to positive and effective results."

Administrative professionals also know their stuff, said Merrick Blancq, chief, Customer Support, Information Management Office. "You cannot well manage what you do not understand. Without that you're merely a bureaucracy, rubberstamping bills for stuff you have no idea about. This unfortunately seems to be the prevailing trend for government," he said.

"Without our admin professionals, I would be late for every meeting, I wouldn't have the proper tools to do my job and official memorandums would never make it out of the office," said John Etzel, Hydroelectric Design Center.

So, to all of our administrative professional staff throughout Portland District, thank you for all you do to keep us on track. For those supervisors who weren't able to tell us how much they appreciate the support they get from their admin staff, please refer to question #2, especially before April 26!



*The Public Affairs staff would like to thank Linda Schafer, our office automation assistant, who, in addition to her invaluable assistance keeping a group of constantly on-the-move employees well managed and on track, provided the inspiration for this article.*

*You're the best!*

## Admin Professionals Day



# USACE ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATING PRINCIPLES

## ***Strive to Achieve Environmental Sustainability***

An environment maintained in a healthy, diverse and sustainable condition is necessary to support life.

## ***Consider Environmental Consequences***

Recognize the interdependence of life and the physical environment. Proactively consider environmental consequences of Corps programs and act accordingly in all appropriate circumstances.

## ***Seek Balance and Synergy***

. . . among human development activities and natural systems by designing economic and environmental solutions that support and reinforce one another.

## ***Accept Responsibility***

Continue to accept corporate responsibility and accountability under the law for activities and decisions under our control that impact human health and welfare and the continued viability of natural systems.

## ***Mitigate Impacts***

Seek ways and means to assess and mitigate cumulative impacts to the environment; bring systems approaches to the full life cycle of our processes and work.

## ***Understand the Environment***

Build and share an integrated scientific, economic, and social knowledge base that supports a greater understanding of the environment and impacts of our work.

## ***Respect Other Views***

Respect views of individuals and groups interested in Corps activities, actively listen, and learn from their perspective in the search to find innovative win-win solutions to the nation's problems, solutions that also protect and enhance the environment.

